

President's Report to Senate January 16, 2024

Welcome back and welcome to 2024! I hope everybody did have some sense of a break from daily routine, and got to spend at least some of their time doing something enjoyable. The New Year has arrived and so has the winter weather of Northern Ontario. I'm told there is a significant amount of pride for Northerners in ensuring that inclement weather rarely impacts University operations and fortunately that has been the case thus far this year. But all this snow along various parts of my route back to Sudbury did unfortunately impact my return from the recent Universities Canada meeting out west, and I only got back physically to Sudbury this past Friday.

As we look ahead to 2024, this year holds much promise as we begin implementation of the Operational Transformation and seek to finalize approval of the University's Strategic Plan in February. Of course 2024 will also bring a new President & Vice-Chancellor on April 1, and while I still have a few months of contributions to put forward, I think Dr. Wells will be joining the University at a time of great opportunity. I've been asked if I have a final "date" for my time with Laurentian and that hasn't yet been established, but I am eager to ensure the smoothest possible transition for Dr. Wells and Laurentian University.

Operational Transformation

The Operational Transformation is progressing. At this point we are still awaiting formal approval of the Operational Transformation plan from the Ministry of Colleges & Universities. They have seen earlier drafts and this isn't so much different. I anticipate that once we receive their formal approval of the plan that we'll be able to move more effectively on plan implementation.

In the meantime, the University will soon present a recommendation on the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to the Board of Governors. This recommendation comes as the result of a lengthy review involving multiple key users of the core systems. This technology underpins much of the data infrastructure for the University as well as its general operations, so will be critical in advancing technology and efficiency across the organization.

Strategic planning

As you already know, the draft Strategic Plan has been endorsed by both Senate and Board in December. This doesn't mean that small changes cannot still be made, in advance of anticipated final approval/endorsement in February. What is happening at the moment is working with the consultant and the Executive Team on what some of the possible "measurables" might be. How will we know if we are progressing on the plan? I personally prefer to use the term "demonstrables", as then it's clearer that both quantitative and qualitative "measures" can be used to show progress.

Board of Governors

The Board recently [appointed one new member, Roxanne Bouchard](#), Vice President and Market Leader at BMO Private Wealth. She is a graduate of our Faculty of Management and has held senior positions at both Scotiabank and BMO. At the same December meeting, current Board member Jay (Jean-Pierre) Barbeau was elected as Vice-Chair of the Board. There are two more nominees for whom we are waiting for the outcome of the LGIC process (Lieutenant Governor in Council). At the December board meeting, the ["institutional neutrality" policy](#) was also passed. This policy has since received quite a bit of external favorable commentary (informal conversations with other university presidents and others highly involved in the post-secondary sector, Ken Steele's Education blog, and without mentioning the Laurentian name, in the *Globe and Mail*).

Update on senior administrative searches

The Search for the new Provost has been extended, as unfortunately the first iteration of the search process did not yield a candidate with sufficient support to be recommended to our Board. There is greater optimism for this upcoming search now that the incoming President & Vice-Chancellor has been named. Most candidates for Provost want to know who their President will be!

Provost Brouwer is chairing several searches. In the Librarian search, two candidates are visiting campus, last week and this, in second round interviews. The Education & Health and Management searches are still recruiting candidates.

With the upcoming retirement of our current AVP Financial Services, Norm Lavalée, set for this summer, the VP Finance & Administration is chairing a committee now interviewing candidates to take over this role. I am told that this search is going well, and they expect to recommend a candidate imminently.

The search for an Associate University Secretary has also been extended and will resume shortly. The second Legal Counsel, working under the University's General Counsel, began work yesterday.

Budget Process

The budget process for the 2024-25 budget year (beginning May 1, 2024) is well underway. Most of the work within the units is complete and has been submitted. The first budget planning forum will take place soon. The process and timing is essentially the same as last year, with the proposed budget going to the Board in April.

Congratulations

On December 11th, a 60-year old electric cable between Parker and Arts broke and the power went off in many campus buildings. Facilities quickly found a generator, and that was in place throughout the whole period until repairs could begin on January 4th. IT knew that they needed to have the power off for some of their scheduled upgrades, so they quickly coordinated with Facilities to do their work at the same time, thus piggybacking on the outage for the replacement and reconnection. On January 4th, our Facilities and IT teams performed substantial upgrades to their respective infrastructures to improve services on campus. I'd like to congratulate all those who were involved in the very early mornings and late nights to be able to achieve this upgrading before classes resumed and students returned to campus, so Pierre Fontaine and his team from Facilities and Luc Roy and his team from IT. It really was impressive and heroic work, and yet for most of us, behind the scenes. I would also like to recognize the efforts of our Food Services and Residence team members who ensured that those who remained on campus throughout the process were well taken care of.

Looking ahead to January 19th, I'd like to recognize those who have been organizing the annual ["CROSHCon" event](#), as well as the Inaugural Leo Gerard Legacy Fund Lecture Series. Keynote Speaker Dr. Katie Goggins, PhD, CCPE, will deliver the Inaugural Lecture of the Leo Gerard Legacy Fund Lecture Series on the topic of occupational vibration-induced injury/disease.

A new school record was recently set by Laurentian Voyageurs long jumper Shelley Hladin. Hladin, a fifth-year criminology student from Chartierville, Quebec, eclipsed the mark she set just last month with a leap of 5.44 metres to earn gold at the Sharon Anderson Memorial Track and Field Meet, hosted by the University of Toronto earlier this month. Third-year nursing

student Kristen Mrozewski of Sudbury also landed on the podium with a bronze-medal performance in the women's 600 metres.

Meghan McCue, PhD candidate in Biomolecular Sciences at Laurentian University, [recently published an article in The Conversation Canada](#). Her article is entitled: "For cancer patients, maintaining muscle is vital to health and treatment, but staying strong is complicated."

Lastly a word of thanks to the many volunteers who participated in the "Frost Week" Orientation activities which began this semester. With many students now beginning their time as students at Laurentian in January, the efforts to get them started off smoothly are critical.